

# Italians See Links to Syria in Airport Attack of 1985

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ROME, Feb. 5 — An Italian prosecutor's report contends that a 1985 attack on the Rome airport was planned in Syria and carried out by the Abu Nidal terrorist organization, according to senior judicial officials.

The report charges that the four gunmen who conducted the attack had intended to seize an Israeli airliner and blow it up over Tel Aviv but were foiled when security men opened fire on them, the officials said.

The Abu Nidal group was also responsible for the attack on the Vienna airport, which took place simultaneously on Dec. 27, 1985, according to the report filed earlier this week but still covered by judicial secrecy.

A total of 20 people died in the two attacks, including five Americans, and more than 110 persons were wounded.

## Requests That 3 Be Charged

In his report the Public Prosecutor, Domenico Sica, requests that three people be charged with perpetrating a massacre. His recommendations are being reviewed by a judge, who will decide whether to call a trial.

Mr. Sica's report does not charge direct involvement by Syrian Government officials in the airport attack, although it notes evidence of links with the Abu Nidal group, according to a magistrate familiar with the document.

A parallel investigation into several terrorist actions possibly organized by Abu Nidal in Italy is still under way, and that inquiry is trying to determine whether Syria is supporting the group, said officials involved in anti-terrorism efforts.

Italian and American officials contended shortly after the 1985 attacks that the attacks had been carried out by the Abu Nidal organization and that there was strong evidence of Syrian support for the group. Syria denied any involvement.

## Confessions by Survivor

Many of the allegations in Mr. Sica's report are based on confessions by the one survivor of the squad that attacked the Rome airport, Ibrahim Mohammed Khaled, 19 years old. He told investigators that he had joined Al Fatah, the largest component of the Palestine Liberation Organization, when he was 11, but then shifted his allegiances to the Abu Nidal group after Israel's 1982 invasion of Lebanon.

According to judicial officials, Mr. Khaled provided a thorough description of Abu Nidal's headquarters in the Rukh al-Din quarter of Damascus, where terrorist actions were planned and begun.

Mr. Khaled, who maintained he had contacts with the intelligence branch of the Syrian Air Force, also described Abu Nidal's training camps in a part of the Bekaa region of Lebanon under Syrian Army control and he alleged that operations ranging from single assassinations to large scale attacks were carefully rehearsed there, the officials said.

## Members in Europe

During training Mr. Khaled said Abu Nidal operatives were repeatedly told that they would mount a series of terrorist actions that would prompt a world war.

Mr. Sica's report charges that the Abu Nidal group is financed through extortion against the rich Arabian Gulf governments, and that it has a large number of resident members in Europe, usually business executives and students, who provide local support for the group's operations, investigators said.

Officials familiar with Mr. Khaled's statements and the prosecutor's report said the repentant terrorist also provided detailed information on Abu Nidal's operations in Europe, much of which has been independently confirmed.

The size and sophistication of the network revealed by Mr. Khaled has surprised law enforcement officers. One official said, "No one had imagined that Abu Nidal had so many safe houses and so arms caches in so many places. It is frightening."

Mr. Khaled said he had been involved in Abu Nidal operations both in France and in Germany, according to officials who said his statements gained credibility when he described a hiding place in a Paris cemetery where the police found a bomb timer hidden inside a toothpaste tube.

## Buried Leather Bag

Investigators in Rome said Mr. Khaled took them to the Villa Glori, a park in the northern part of the city, to show them the spot where the weapons used in the airport attack had been buried. A bit of digging uncovered a leather bag where the investigators said they found security seals from

hand grenades, gun cotton and newspapers still covered with grease from Kalashnikov rifles.

Mr. Khaled said he was told where to find the weapons by Rashid al-Hamieda, who he said had coordinated the Rome airport attack and had also been involved in a 1982 raid on Rome's main synagogue, in which a 2-year-old boy was killed. Mr. Hamieda's whereabouts are unknown.

According to investigators, Mr. Hamieda's most important role was to act as a liaison between the commando squad sent out from Damascus to conduct the attack and resident sympathizers who maintained the group's network of safe houses and arms caches here. Mr. Khaled said he never had any contact with the local branch of the organization.

In addition to Mr. Khaled and Mr. Hamieda, the prosecutor's report seeks an indictment against Abu Nidal, a shadowy figure whose real name is Sabry al-Banna.

The report maintains that Mr. Hamieda was probably present during the airport attack and gave the signal for it to begin. An official involved in the investigation said it appeared that Mr. Hamieda was supposed to undertake a diversionary action elsewhere in the international terminal while the four-man guerrilla team tried to round up Americans and Israelis before forcing their way onto an El Al jetliner.

The plan went astray when El Al security guards opened fire on the four guerrillas, killing three of them and seriously wounding Mr. Khaled, who was traveling under documents identifying him as Abdallah Sarhan.